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Professor F. A. March, of Lafayette College, in a brief address commented on the study of Chaucer in America, paying special tribute to the memory of Francis James Child. The Secretary of the Association supplemented this address with special reference to the scholarship and influence of Professor March himself.

The reading of papers was then resumed.

28. "A Friend of Chaucer's." By Professor G. L. Kittredge, of Harvard University. [Printed in *Publications*, xvi, 450 f.]

29. "The Date of *Palamon and Arcite*." By Professor John M. Manly, of the University of Chicago. [The author being absent this paper was read by title.]

30. "Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*." By Dr. W. H. Schofield, of Harvard University. [Printed in *Publications*, xvi, 405 f.]

31. "Is Chaucer to be reckoned as a Modern or as a Medieval Poet?" By Professor F. B. Gummere, of Haverford College.

Among the many characteristics which sunder modern poetry from the poetry vaguely known as medieval, there are two which may be put in the foreground. Medieval poets differ from modern poets in the quality of their sentiment and in the nature of their humor. In the middle ages sentiment and humor were largely impersonal; sentiment either lay in solution with the material of the poem, or else belonged to a guild, as in the case of the hymn. Humor, too, was an affair of communities rather than of persons: see Burckhardt, *Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*, 6th ed., I, 167.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, both modern humor and modern sentiment are overwhelmingly individual, a quality which first comes sharply into view, for continental poetry, with Villon, and may be studied by any reader in a poet like Heine. Turning to Chaucer, and applying these two tests, the critic is fain to say that this great poet is tentatively modern in his sentiment, triumphantly modern in his humor, and distinctly modern in the

<sup>1</sup>See also Gaston Paris, *Poésie du Moyen-Age*, II, 232, and the fourth chapter of my *Beginnings of Poetry*.

attitude which he takes toward his own work. Distinguished from the ruck of medieval poets, impersonal as they are, and mainly mouthpieces of some guild or profession, Chaucer looms up as one of the first great artists. Ten Brink (*Studien*, p. 1) calls him "the real creator of the poetry of art" in English literature. Professor Lounsbury (*Studies*, III, 291 ff., 323 ff.) is to the same purpose: the poet is a conscious artist, a critic even; and his pervasive individuality appeals to one on every page. These general considerations could be reinforced by many particular examples. A famous passage in the *Nonne Prestes Tale*, ridiculing Vinesauf's lament over Richard I, shows Chaucer's detachment from any guild, his easy satire on quite artistic and personal grounds, and, in sum, a sharp recoil against medieval and communal sentiment. The minor poems display a tendency to individualize large issues of time and fate and humanity,—that almost sure test of the modern lyric. I use the word tendency, for that is the most that one can say; the medieval habit is still strong with Chaucer, and on every page, instead of this easy step from personal to cosmic, so common in modern lyric, Chaucer appeals to his *bokes*, to his authorities: "Tullius kyndenesse" is held up to Scogan in the Envoy; all the more modern seems the contrast in the preceding stanza, which strikes a note less common with Chaucer than critics seem to believe:

Ne thynke I never of sleep to wake my muse  
That rusteth in my shethe stille in pees;  
While I was yong, I put hir forth in prees;  
But al shal passen that men prose or ryme,  
Take every man his turne as for his tyme,—

a sentiment borrowed from Chaucer's own Wife of Bath in a passage (*Prol. Wife of Bath's Tale*, vv. 469-476) which is perhaps the most representative of the poet's genius in all his works, and which, touching as it does the enduring qualities, defies critical classification in terms of time and environment.

Notwithstanding all these cases of detachment and individual attitude which could be brought from the poet's works, one will find that Chaucer is not only in the medieval world, but of it. Like Petrarch, he looks both forward and backward, and the backward gaze is the surer of the two. Chaucer, as everybody knows, has three claims upon his readers which make him immortal; he excels in narrative, in humor, in the drawing of characters. The narrative poem is not a modern achievement; and one may therefore turn, for a decision of the question proposed in this paper, to those other excellent differences.

Modern humor is a kind of sentiment in recoil; and of this there are very few traces in Chaucer. True, his humor is not of the helpless sort so common in the middle ages. It is sharp enough, personal enough, even, in one sense, for it is Chaucer's own; but it is not individual sentiment

reacting on itself. What makes it irresistible is the finish of a masterly art which nevertheless works in medieval materials and in the medieval manner. Chaucer is a sound churchman who still feels free to make fun of the priest, and does it with a suavity as distinct as Dante's ferocity of hate. He puts his age at arm's length; but while he sees the humor of it in part, he belongs to it, and is unconsciously medieval in a dozen ways. He is proud of the authorities whom he can adduce, uses the common stock of medieval lore, and has the awe of *gramarye*. "In stories as men fynde," or "I fynde eek in stories elleswhere," is the constant phrase. He loves to parade these authorities, and treats poetry, quite in Dante's spirit, as a kind of guild. So at the end of *Troilus*:—

Go, litel book . . .  
 But, litel book, no making thou n'envye,  
 But subgit be to alle poesy!  
 And kis the steppes wheras thou seest pace  
 Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace!

To feel this medieval side of Chaucer at its best, one must read neither the early poems nor yet the *Canterbury Tales*, but a fairly mature work like the *House of Fame*. The lists of persons, the sights in temple and hall, the allegory, the explanations—

For in fight and blod-shedyng  
 Is used gladly clarionyng . . .

are all distinctly medieval in manner and even in spirit, with a certain touch of that helplessness which cannot always be charged to the account of humor. Even personal and clever interruptions of the story—

As fyn as ducat of Venyse,  
 Of which to litel in my pouche is . . .

remind one not so much of the modern poet as of the medieval reciter and minstrel; although the jocose reflections of the poet as the eagle bears him aloft are far too good for any such source. Even Chaucer's great humorous achievements, where he warms to his work and has no peer in all verse, still cling to a type, a formula; compare the regrets of the Wife of Bath, in that superb passage already noted, with the wholly modern note of Villon's *Belle Heaulmiere*.

It is, however, in his drawing of characters that Chaucer, great as his triumph must be regarded, is still medieval in at least one important characteristic. The characters are still types, and so bear the stamp of class and even guild. In one sense, to be sure, these men and women are splendidly individual; but a comparison of the Wife of Bath,—this name

is significant,—with Mrs. Quickly of Eastcheap, of the Squire with Romeo, of the Merchant with Antonio, will reveal a difference of conception not to be explained by the passage from epic to drama, or even from Chaucer to Shakspeare. It is rather a passage from medieval and partly communal conditions to a world which, in Burckhardt's phrase, has brought about the emancipation of the individual. Judged by his genius, Chaucer, like any great poet, belongs to no one period; judged by the conditions which governed the making of his poetry, he is mainly medieval.

32. "The *Prologue of the Wife of Bath's Tale*." By Professor W. E. Mead, of the Wesleyan University. [Printed in *Publications*, xvi, 388 f.]

33. "The Development of Middle English Final -ich, -ig, -y." By Professor George Hempl, of the University of Michigan.

In the development of Germanic *-īc-* into Middle-English *-ic*, *-ich*, and *-y*, the last form arose before a consonant. As the great majority of words begin with a consonant, this form gradually got the upper hand. In the *Ormulum*, the phonetic condition is still clearly shown: *ērplic lāff* D 244, 403, *ērplic käre* 4563, but *ēorþlic āhhite* 4673, 10222, also spelled *ēorþlike āhhite* with silent *-e* 5667; but the form in *-ig* had begun to assert itself at the end of a line, even if the next line began with a vowel: *hæpeliȝ* | *Off* D 79. The adverb—northern *-lik(e)*, southern *-lich(e)*—fell in with the adjective, as did also *everich*, and had *-ic* or *-ich* before vowels, and *-y* before consonants (which usage is still reflected in Chaucer's *everichon*, *everydeel*, *everywhere*; but in all, the form in *-y* ultimately prevailed. The inflected adjective and the full adverbial form in *-like*, *-liche*, continued in use (1) when the meter demanded the stress on the *-i-* and the retention of the weak syllable *-e* (*gastlike lác* 6711, but *gástliȝ lác* 6706); (2) when a poet like Chaucer wanted a rime for *riche*. The pronoun *ic*, *ich*, *y*, had essentially the same development, but the fact that the syllable constituted a whole word,—which was often used alone and not infrequently stressed,—led to an earlier break-up of the original phonetic status. It thus appears that Old Norse is not responsible for *-ly* and that "the weak form" is not the explanation of either *-ly* or *I*. Furthermore, these forms are as indigenous in the South as in the North; hence, texts with *ich* and *I* side by side are not on that account to be charged with a mixed dialect.

34. "The Rhetoric of Verse in Chaucer." By Professor James W. Bright, of the Johns Hopkins University.